

“Do Not Judge by Your Feelings”

St. John 16:16-22

May 3, 2020

SERMON 1912

by Michael David Henson

The sermon text is from John 16:20, “Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.”

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today is the third Sunday in Easter. The Gospel reading for today and the next two Sundays are taken from Jesus’ sermon to the apostles at the Passover on Maundy Thursday, the night in which Jesus was betrayed. Now at first that choice of readings might seem to anachronistic. You might expect the Gospel readings to be from the accounts after the Sundays. Nevertheless, there appears to be very good reason for their choice.

In these words, we hear the loving heart of Jesus being poured out for his dear believers. These words which form His last will and testament were carefully chosen that His disciples might have comfort to endure and make it through a very difficult time. They were about to lose Jesus. He would be arrested that night and led away in chains. By the next morning, He would be hanging on a cross. By Friday evening He would be declared dead, taken down, and laid in a tomb. As some of the disappointed disciples were later found to say, “We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel” (Lk 22:21).

--For those gathered in that upper room, Jesus gave them assurances that His going away was for their good. We know that good to be the accomplishment of our redemption.

--He also promises that though His going away would at first bring sorrow, it would finally result in a joy that is unending. Thus after His resurrection they will rejoice unceasingly that their Savior died for their sins.

--He also assured them of the temporary nature of their trials. Again and again, He tells them that their trials and afflictions will only be a little while. You can hold on. You can endure. It will only be a little while.

Jesus is preparing these believers by giving them His Word. They are to trust in His words of comfort despite the situation and the look of things.

Our situation is different from those who gathered on that Maundy Thursday. We know that the little while of sorrow would only last until Easter Sunday. We know that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. We have that joy of eternal salvation, which no one can take away. Nevertheless, there are some things that have not changed.

First, this world is still a sinful world. In it are those who not only reject the Word of God for themselves, but they derive joy from persecution the Christian faith and its adherents. Like those priests who would stop nothing short of having Jesus crucified, there are still those do the same today. They are so deluded by the devil that

they derive pleasure from harming those who love God. Jesus says, “you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice...” (v.20). We weep at idolatry and false teaching, while they rejoice at the diversity. We weep at the degradation of the human body with pornography, homosexuality, and transgender delusions, while they hold it up as praiseworthy. We weep at those lost to abortion and they shout it out. In many other countries throughout the world, the Christian religion is not just ridiculed, but is forbidden by law. Some of the followers of Mohammed maim and kill Christians. Other countries like India severely restrict any proselytizing.

Second, this world is full of trouble. Although Christ has freed us from the wages of our sin, which is death, there are still many consequences of sin that remain. We still return to the dust from which we came. We still eat our bread by the sweat of our brow. Like the ground producing thorns, the physical world still fights against us. Women still have pain in childbearing. Sinful desires between husband and wife still seek to rule each other, rather than serve in love.

Third, we have not yet received by sight the fruits of Christ’s resurrection. We are united with Christ’ resurrection in our baptism, but we have not yet been raised without sin. That waits a little while. Though we are united with Christ, we do not yet enjoy the heavenly vision. That waits a little while. Forgiven by Christ, we are holy saints in a holy Christian church, yet we sin daily and sorrow that we do “those things that are contrary our{their} profession.”

Like the gathered apostles we need to hear Jesus’ words. Though we have marked another Easter during our life here, we, too, need to learn of the loving heart of our Savior. Through the Word of God, **Jesus is preparing us to trust in His words of comfort despite the situation and the look of things.**

Many people today live based on their present circumstances and their feelings or emotions regarding it. If it feels good to them, they do it. If others praise them, then they throw in their lot with adulterers. If things are going well so that the church is growing and people are happy, then people think it must be right. Or if things don’t work out, then you must have done something wrong.

First, our Jesus wishes to protect us by teaching us to rely upon Him and His Word. You can’t trust your emotions to show you the right way. Just because you please your friends, the crowd, or society, your actions may not be pleasing toward your God. You can’t trust just any religious teacher to lead you into the fellowship of Christ’s religion.

Only the true and clear Word of God, which is the light of truth, can show those who be in error “to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness.” Jesus tells them and us, “Amen, Amen. I say to you....” We must cling to Jesus’ words so that we retain the joy of eternal life and the resurrection from the dead. Like last week, we must be sheep who hear the voice of our Good Shepherd.

Second, this week we are being warned that things are going to get all mixed up in this world. Good will be called bad and bad will be called good. Those who call themselves believers will deny the faith. Those who claim to be the one true church will deny salvation by grace through faith alone apart from works. Without the Word of God, we would lose our faith in Christ. Therefore, Jesus warns us so that when it appears that Jesus has gone away, you will hold to His Word. When it seems as if the church has failed, you will know that even the gates of Hades cannot prevail against purely preached Word and rightly administered Sacraments.

Third, you need only to hold on right now, for our Lord promises that “it will only be a little while.” Our Jesus will shorten those days so that it will not overwhelm you. He will provide for you strength and endurance through His Word and Sacraments. For right now, “avoid those things that are contrary to our Christian profession and follow such things as are agreeable to the same.” If you believe now, then hold on to our Savior, it will only be a little while.

Fourth, just as our Lord so graciously provided for his disciples that Thursday with true teaching, so **our Lord has given us the tools for our Christian journey, so that we may hold on for the little while, until He returns.** In the bulletin paragraphs from Christmas on, I have been including snippets of an article written by Dr. Martin Luther entitled, “On the Councils and the Church.” I have been reproducing those as posts at our web site and Facebook page. I am impressed by the list which Luther has amassed of the gifts God has given to keep His believers strong.

Luther says, “These are the true seven principal parts of the great holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit effects in us a daily sanctification and vivification in Christ.”

Listen to these helps which the loving heart of our God has provided.

#1 The Word of God “Now, wherever you hear or see this word preached, believed, professed, and lived, do not doubt that the true *ecclesia sancta catholica*, “a Christian holy people” must be there, **even though their number is very small.**”

#2 The Holy Sacrament of Baptism “... is a public sign and a precious, holy possession by which God’s people are sanctified. It is the holy bath of regeneration through the Holy Spirit [Titus 3:5], in which we bathe and with which we are washed of sin and death by the Holy Spirit, as in the innocent holy blood of the Lamb of God.”

#3 The Holy Sacrament of the Altar “... is a public sign and a precious, holy possession left behind by Christ by which his people are sanctified so that they also exercise themselves in faith and openly confess that they are Christian, just as they do with the word and with baptism.

#4 The Office of the Keys “..., whereby the Holy Spirit again sanctifies the fallen sinners redeemed by Christ’s death, and whereby the Christians confess that they are a holy people in this world under Christ.”

#5 Her Ministers “..., who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ...,”

#6 Prayer, Praise and Thanksgiving “... Where you see and hear the Lord’s Prayer prayed and taught; or psalms or other spiritual songs sung, in accordance with the word of God and the true faith; also the creed, the Ten Commandments, and the catechism used in public, you may rest assured that a holy Christian people of God are present. For prayer, too, is one of the precious holy possessions whereby everything is sanctified, as St. Paul says [I Tim. 4:5]. The psalms too are nothing but prayers in which we praise, thank, and glorify God. The creed and the Ten Commandments are also God’s word and belong to the holy possession, whereby the Holy Spirit sanctifies the holy people of Christ.”

Now the seventh item does not at first sound like a gift from God, but Luther is right in saying that it is blessing. And yes, God even turns it upside down so that it works toward out good.

#7 The Sacred Cross of Affliction “...the holy Christian people are externally recognized

by the holy possession of the sacred cross. They must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord's Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God's word, enduring this for the sake of Christ, Matthew 5 [:11], "Blessed are you when men persecute you on my account." ...**This too is a holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies his people, but also blesses them.** (Luther's Works, v.41, p.164-165)

In conclusion, you need to know that the Prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament speaks of our New Testament timeframe. He, too, encourages us. He confidently declares that the fruits of Christ's resurrection will lift His disciples up. Yes, in this world believers in Christ will have trouble and the world will rejoice at our sorrow. Nevertheless, no one can take away our joy of salvation, and the sorrow will last only a little while.

Isaiah says,

²⁹He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.

³⁰Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,

³¹But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint."